

Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council Executive Summary of the 2005 Annual Report

Estimated number of persons in the State of Delaware with developmental disabilities: 14,264; Grant from ADD \$458,614; State funds \$20,000; other funds \$9,500. Chair: Jamie Wolfe, Sr. Administrator: Patricia L. Maichle; Margaret M. O'Neill Building, 2nd Floor, 410 Federal St., Dover, De. 19901. Phone (302)739-3333; Fax (302)739-2015; web site www.state.de.us/ddc.

Council funding and committee work were directed toward the following projects:

1. Junior Partners in Policy Making Program: This novel program, conducted by the Center for Disabilities Studies at the University of Delaware, was modeled after the adult Partners in Policy Making Program. Fifteen students with and without disabilities participated for one week at the University of Delaware and learned advocacy skills that will help them both now and in adulthood.

2. Delaware New Scripts: This program with the Delaware Early Childhood Center trains parents of children with disabilities to tell their stories in the State's college classrooms of education, nursing and social work majors and in professional trainings of social service professionals. The purpose is to explain what it is like to be the parent of a child with a disability. Parents describe the joys, sorrows, problems and frustrations they deal with on a daily basis so the students develop an understanding of and empathy for those parents before they begin working in their careers.

4. Inclusion Conference: This annual conference is a collaborative effort with the Department of Education; the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative and several other organizations. Its purpose is to train regular education and special education teachers, plus school administrators on the latest practices from across the country on the inclusion of children with disabilities into the regular classroom. It highlights how, not only the children with disabilities benefit from inclusion, but all students involved in an inclusive classroom benefit.

5. LIFE Conference: This annual conference is the largest disabilities related conference in the State. It is held in January each year in Dover. It is a multi-agency collaboration that, each year, conducts twelve workshops in four main tracks involving disabilities issues. The tracks are Legislation, Independence through Assistive Technology, Family and Education. Annually over 500 people attend.

6. Universal Design for Learning: This project is directed by the University of Delaware's Assistive Technology Initiative in-conjunction-with the Department of Education. It trains Delaware's educators on how to design a classroom and use available computer and other assistive technology to ensure that students with different learning styles and capabilities can be successful in the classroom.

7. Physicians Awareness "First Signs" Project: This project is with the Autism Society of Delaware in-conjunction-with the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and the Division of Public Health. Its purpose is to train the State's Family Practice Doctor's and pediatricians on how to recognize warning signs for autism and other developmental disabilities at a very early age in order to make referrals for treatment much earlier than is now usually the practice. It has been demonstrated that the earlier treatment begins involving children with autism and other developmental disabilities, the better the outcomes will be later in the child's life.

8. Assistive Technology in the Workplace: This project is with the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative in-conjunction-with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Its purpose is to train employers, people with disabilities and family members on the latest assistive technology available that enables people with disabilities to become productive employees at various job sites.

9. Job Survival Skills Training: This project with The Arc of Delaware trains their clients who are employed at MBNA on job socialization skills to help them remain employed. Additionally, The Arc staff works closely with managers at MBNA to quickly correct any problems that may cause a client to lose employment.

10. Money Follows the Person Study: This project is with the State Council for Persons with Disabilities. The study focuses on what needs to be done in Delaware to implement the Olmstead Supreme Court Decision. Funds are used to support a person if he/she chooses to live in the community. A key element of the study is determining what services are available in the community and what services are still needed in order for “Money Follows the Person” to be successful in Delaware.

11. On My Own Workshops: This project is being administered by Independent Resources, Inc. The purpose is to provide training for people currently in institutions who have decided to move into the community. The training covers everything a person needs to know in order to begin a new life in the community. In addition, some funding to help the person get started for items such as required deposits, follow up is provided to those who completed the workshops to ensure they are being successful.

12. First Steps Booklet: This project is administered by the University of Delaware’s Center for Disabilities Studies. Its purpose is to provide useful information to people new to the disabilities experience or new to Delaware. It will provide information on what steps to take first in order to start receiving services. Helpful tips such as what information you will need to have available before making a call; where you should call; what questions you should ask and why you should ask them will be included.

13. Partners Graduate Training: This initiative with the University of Delaware’s Center for Disabilities Studies consisted of three weekends where Partners in Policy Making Graduates met and decided how they wanted to organize to be more effective advocates for themselves, their children and people with disabilities in general. They decided to organize into three separate groups. One will develop an e-mail list serve of graduates to better coordinate important disabilities issues and needs. A second group will develop a Partners Graduate Web-site with current disabilities information of interest to the graduates and the third will develop a Mentor Program where graduates will mentor both new Partners students and other past graduates.

14. Delaware People First Trip: Annually, the Council sponsors a self-advocacy organization. This year we sponsored Delaware People First, a self-advocacy organization affiliated with The Arc of Delaware to take an educational trip to the historical sites in Philadelphia. The purpose was to teach how our rights as Americans came about and how those rights pertain to Americans with disabilities.

15. Beyond Stress for Teens: This program conducted by the Mental Health Association in Delaware focused on at-risk teens currently in facilities such as Ferris School, the Stevenson House and the Juvenile Detention Center. They were provided information on how to obtain resources to alleviate stress that, previously, caused them problems.

Additionally, they were provided information on other resources available to them to help them not be repeat offenders.

16. Disabilities Awareness Day Picnic: The fourth annual Disabilities Awareness Day Picnic was held for the first time this year at the Delaware State fair Grounds and we had five-hundred-fifteen people attend. Besides great food, music and fun, it featured a voter registration station, a State Police working dog demonstration, support services vendors, magicians, dancers, and Rocky Bluewinkle from the Wilmington Blue Rocks.

17. Brain Injury Association of Delaware Conference: This annual conference focused on the prevention and treatment of traumatic brain injuries. Additionally, aftercare of people with brain injuries was discussed. One-hundred and sixteen people attended.

18. Traumatic Brain Injury Books for Schools: This project provided hundreds of informational books on traumatic brain injury to Delaware schools. Every School Psychologist, Educational Diagnostician, Special Education Director and School nurse received a copy to enable them to better recognize the symptoms of brain injury in students.

19. Legislative Event: The purpose of this 4th annual event was to inform the General Assembly of the immediate concerns for people with disabilities in Delaware. The Council sponsors it in collaboration with several other disabilities organizations. Eighty-nine people attended.